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ECHOES FROM
THEOCRITVS

by
EDWARD · CRACROFT LEFROY

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SELWYN & BLOUNT, LTD. LONDON





Edw. A. S. 1890..

to you
Drews.

Philip Roberts

ECHOES FROM THEOCRITUS
AND OTHER POEMS



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ECHOES FROM THEOCRITVS



By

EDWARD CRACROFT LEFROY

WITH DECORATIONS BY JOHN AVSTEN

and an Introduction by
JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

LONDON - SELWYN & BLOUNT LTD.



EDWARD CRACROFT LEFROY*

BY JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

EDWARD CRACROFT LEFROY was born at Blackheath on March 29th, 1855, and educated at Blackheath Proprietary School and at Keble College, Oxford. In 1878 he took orders, and though he worked as a parish clergyman in Lambeth with Archbishop Tait, and at other places, he suffered from chronic physical weakness of a distressing nature. As early as 1882 he learned that his heart was seriously affected and that he could not expect length of life. He is said to have borne his illness with "breezy healthfulness of thought and feeling." Combining in a singular measure Hellenic cheerfulness with Christian faith and patience, he was able

* Extracted from Symonds' essay on Lefroy in "In the Key of Blue," by kind permission of the publisher, Mr. Elkin Mathews.

to wait death with a spiritual serenity sweeter than the steadfastness of stoical endurance. He died at the age of thirty-five on September 19th, 1891.

Lefroy's sonnets originally appeared in four paper-covered pamphlets.* In 1885 they were collected and re-published in a single volume with the title "Echoes from Theocritus, etc." Mr. Andrew Lang and Mr. William Sharp were among those who discussed their merit.

The thirty "Echoes from Theocritus" are all penetrated with that purged Hellenic sentiment which was the note of Lefroy's genius. They are exquisite cameos in miniature carved upon fragments broken from the idylls ; nor do I disagree with a critic who said, when they first appeared, that "rarely has the great pastoral poet been so freely transmuted without loss of his spell." Nevertheless, these sonnets have not the same personal interest, nor, in my opinion, the same artistic importance, as others in which the poet's fancy dealt more at large with themes suggested to him by his study of the

* (1) "Echoes from Theocritus," (2) "Cystisus and Galingale," (3) "Windows of the Church," (4) "Sketches and Studies" (Blackheath: H. Burnside, 1883). His poems were later collected and edited by Mr. Wilfred Austin Gill, under the title of "Edward Cracroft Lefroy: His Life and Poems" (London, 1897).

Greek past. Take, for instance: "Something Lost" (p. 54).

Here we feel that Lefroy (like Wordsworth when he yearned for Triton rising in authentic vision from the sea) had his soul lodged in Hellas. Of how many English poets may not this be said: "Come back, ye wandering Muses, come back home!"? Landor was right. The home of the imagination of the artist is in Greece. Gray, Keats, Shelley, even Byron, Landor, Wordsworth, even Matthew Arnold, all the great and good poets who have passed away from us signified this truth in one way or in another, each according to his quality. It was the distinction of Lefroy that he "came back home" with a peculiarly fresh and child-like perception of its charm. Seeking to define his touch upon Hellenic things, I light upon this barren and scholastic formula: "he had a spiritual apperception of sensuous beauty." The strong, clear music which throbbed so piercingly, so passionately, round the Isles of Greece, reached his sense attenuated and refined, like the notes of the Alpine horn, after ascending and tinkling through a thousand feet of woods and waterfalls and precipices.

How he could convey a single Greek suggestion into the body of an English poem may be exemplified by "A Thought from Pindar" (p. 59).

The contrast between the powers of two rival arts, sculpture and poetry, to confer immortal fame upon some noble agent in the world's drama has been well conceived and forcibly presented.

Like all poets who have confined their practice mainly to contemplative and meditative forms of verse, Lefroy reflected on the nature of art. That he was not in theory "the idle singer of an idle day" may be gathered from his imitation of Théophile Gautier's sonnet, "L'Art" ("Art that Endures," p. 63). With this lofty conception of the spirit in which the artist should approach his task, Lefroy did not exaggerate his own capacity as poet or seek to exalt his function. A sonnet called "The Torch-Bearer" (p. 60) expresses, in a charming metaphor, the thought that poetry is but the soul's light cast upon the world for other souls to see by.

It was not to be expected that a man who vibrated so deeply and truly to the beauty of the world and to the loveliness of "the young life," and who was himself condemned to life-long sickness with no prospect but the grave upon this planet, should not have left some utterances upon the problems of death and thwarted vitality. It must be remembered, however, that Lefroy was a believing Christian, and for him the tomb was, therefore, but a doorway

opened into regions of eternal life. It is highly characteristic of the man that, in his poetry, he made no vulgar appeal to the principles of his religious creed, but remained within the region of that Christianised Stoicism I have attempted to define.

The artistic value of Lefroy's work is great. That first attracted me to him, before I knew what kind of man I was to meet with in the poet. Now that I have learned to appreciate his life-philosophy, it seems to me that this is even more noteworthy than his verse. We are all of us engaged, in some way or another, with the problem of co-ordinating the Hellenic and Christian traditions to the governing conceptions of a scientific age. Lefroy proved that it is possible to combine religious faith with frank delight in natural loveliness, to be a Christian without asceticism, and a Greek without sensuality. I can imagine that this will appear simple to many of my readers. They will exclaim: "We do not need a minor poet like Lefroy to teach that lesson. Has not the problem been solved by thousands?" Perhaps it has. But there is a specific note, a particular purity, a clarified distinction, in the amalgam offered by Lefroy. What I have called his spiritual apperception of sensuous beauty was the outcome of a rare and exquisite personality. It has

the translucent quality of a gem, beryl, or jacinth, which, turn it to the light and view it from all sides, retains one flawless colour. This simplicity and absolute sincerity of instinct is surely uncommon in our perplexed epoch. To rest for a moment upon the spontaneous and unambitious poetry which flowed from such a nature cannot fail to refresh minds wearied with the storm and stress of modern thought. To abide in communion with an individuality so finely and felicitously moulded must be a source of strength and soothing to those even who find themselves incapable of taking up exactly the same fundamental principles.



CONTENTS

ECHOES FROM THEOCRITUS:

	PAGE
I. BATTUS	17
II. A SHEPHERD MAIDEN	18
III. DAPHNIS	19
IV. A SICILIAN NIGHT	20
V. A SUMMER DAY IN OLD SICILY	21
VI. SIMAETHA, I.	22
VII. SIMAETHA, II.	23
VIII. THE GOATHERD IN LOVE	25
IX. THE LOVE-SPELL	26
X. SIMICHIDAS	27
XI. AGEANAX	28
XII. COMATAS	29
XIII. AT THE SHRINE OF PAN	30
XIV. AT THE FARM OF PHRASIDAMUS	31
XV. THE SINGING-MATCH, I.	33
XVI. THE SINGING-MATCH, II.	34
XVII. THE SINGING-MATCH, III.	35
XVIII. MENALCAS	36
XIX. THE TOMB OF DIOCLES	37
XX. HYLAS	38

ECHOES FROM THEOCRITUS—*continued*

	PAGE
XXI. THE TUNNY-FISHERS	39
XXII. THE YOUTH OF HERACLES	41
XXIII. THE FLUTE OF DAPHNIS	42
XXIV. A SACRED GROVE	43
XXV. A SYLVAN REVEL	44
XXVI. THYRSIS	45
XXVII. CLEONICUS	46
XXVIII. THE EPITAPH OF EUSTHENES	47
XXIX. THE MONUMENT OF CLEITA	48
XXX. THE GRAVE OF HIPPONAX	50

MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS :

I. IN THE MEADOW	52
II. ON THE SUMMIT	53
III. SOMETHING LOST	54
IV. SARK	55
V. A PALESTRAL STUDY	56
VI. FLORA	57
VII. VIRGIL	58
VIII. A THOUGHT FROM PINDAR	59
IX. THE TORCH-BEARER	60
X. BY A GRAVESIDE	61
XI. THE ART THAT ENDURES	63
XII. AN APOLOGY	64

ECHOES FROM THEOCRITUS

The 1885 edition of Lefroy's sonnets was dedicated to Mr. Wilfrid Austin Gill, and contained a preface by the author in which he said :

“ A few special acknowledgments are necessary. In the ‘ Echoes from Theocritus ’ it is Bishop Wordsworth’s edition of the poet to which the reference is made ; but I am greatly indebted to Mr. Andrew Lang’s excellent prose translation for renderings of particular words and phrases which very likely I should not have lighted upon without his aid. It will be noticed that the first five sonnets have no ‘ text ’ in the Author. The rest are founded upon some one passage in the Idyls or Epigrams. How slight the foundation often is may be ascertained by anyone curious enough to follow up the references given.”

“ The influence of Mr. F. W. H. Myers’ deeply interesting ‘ Classical Essays ’ will be traced in the sonnets on ‘ Virgil ’ and ‘ Something Lost.’ ”

“ Sonnet XI. is due in part to a lyric by Théophile Gautier called ‘ L’Art.’ ”



I.

BATTUS.

O SUN-BROWNE^D shepherd, whose untutored grace
Awoke the Singer of that southern isle,
What time he lingered in his father's place,
And bore not yet his music to the Nile :
How soon we make in life a tranquil space
Whenas, our foolish cares forgot the while,
We read the legend of thy classic face,
And catch the lustre of thy lyric smile.
Sing to us still in songs of tourney-type,
As if the jealous Milon loitered near,
Or let thy fingers twinkle o'er the pipe,
And breathe a mellow cadence sweet and clear,
Till all thy browsing lambs forego the ripe
Arbutus buds, and circle round to hear.

II.

A SHEPHERD MAIDEN.

ON shores of Sicily a shape of Greece !
Dear maid, what means this lonely communing
With winds and waves ? What fancy, what caprice
Has drawn thee from thy fellows ? Do they fling
Rude jests at thee ? Or seekest thou surcease
Of drowsy toil in noontday shepherding ?
Enough : our questions cannot break thy peace ;
Thou art a shade,—a long-entombèd thing.
But still we see thy sun-lit face, O sweet,
Shining eternal where it shone of yore ;
Still comes a vision of blue-veinèd feet
That stand for ever on a pebbly shore ;
While round, the tidal waters flow and fleet
And ripple, ripple, ripple, evermore.

III.

DAPHNIS.

WHEN Daphnis comes adown the purple steep
From out the rolling mists that wrap the dawn,
Leaving aloft his crag-encradled sheep,
Leaving the snares that vex the dappled fawn,
He gives the signal for the flight of sleep,
And hurls a windy blast from hunter's horn
At rose-hung lattices, whence maidens peep
To glimpse the young glad herald of the morn.
Then haply one will rise and bid him take
A brimming draught of new-drawn milk a-foam ;
But fleet his feet and fain ; he will not break
His patient fast at any place but home,
Where his fond mother waits him with a cake
And lucent honey dripping from the comb.

IV.

A SICILIAN NIGHT.

COME, stand we here within this cactus-brake,
And let the leafy tangle cloak us round.
It is the spot whereof the Seer spake—
To nymph and faun a nightly trysting-ground.
How still the scene ! No zephyr stirs to shake
The listening air. The trees are slumber-bound
In soft repose. There's not a bird awake
To witch the silence with a silver sound.
Now haply shall the vision trance our eyes,
By heedless mortals all too rarely scanned,
Of mystic maidens in immortal guise,
Who mingle shadowy hand with shadowy hand,
And moving o'er the lilies circle-wise,
Beat out with naked feet a saraband.

A SUMMER DAY IN OLD SICILY.

GODS, what a sun ! I think the world's aglow.
This garment irks me. Phœbus, it is hot !
'T were sad if Glycera should find me shot
By flame-tipped arrows from the Archer's bow.
Perchance he envies me,—the villain ! O
For one tree's shadow or a cliff-side grot !
Where shall I shelter that he slay me not ?
In what cool air or element ? I know.
The sea shall save me from the sweltering land.
Far out I'll wade, till creeping up and up,
The cold green water quenches every limb.
Then to the jealous god with lifted hand
I'll pour libation from a rosy cup,
And leap, and dive, and see the tunnies swim.

VI.

SIMAETHA, I.

Idyl ii.

Go, pluck me laurel-leaves, dear Thestylis,
From any bough that shimmers in the moon ;
To dread Selene pray the while, and miss
No single word of all the magic rune.
She, only she, can grant the lover's boon,
She, only she, restore a maiden's bliss ;
He comes not now, my sweet, but soon, O soon,
He will be waiting, watching, for my kiss.
Twelve days ; ah ! is it twelve, since last we met ?
Quick wind about the bowl the ruddy skein !
He has forgotten : cruel to forget !
But this red wool shall rouse him into pain,
This charm of charms shall wake his passion yet.
O good my goddess, bring my Love again !

VII.

SIMAETHA, II.

Now take the barley grains, sweet Thestylis,
And fling them right and left upon the floor ;
If still he lingers, Delphis' bones like this
Shall be disjoined upon a wreck-strewn shore.
See how I burn the laurel shoots. They hiss
And curl and crackle, blasted to the core ;
And Delphis' flesh shall wither up like this
Unless he quickly seeks my shamèd door.
In brazen pans the wax is melting fast :
O gracious goddess, bid thy work begin !
So melt young Delphis, till he speeds at last,
Beneath my window wails his bitter sin,—
Begs me to pardon all his folly past
And of my clemency to let him in.



VIII.

THE GOATHERD IN LOVE.

Idyl iii., 1-7.

GOOD Tityrus, attend these goats awhile,
And let me seek where Amaryllis hides,
Crannied, I guess, beneath that rocky pile
With fern atop and ivy-mantled sides.
'Tis there most days the merry girl abides,
And flashes from her cave a sudden smile,
Which like a pharos-flame her lover guides
And makes him hope he looks not wholly vile.
If thou canst guard the flock while I am gone,
I will but notice how my lady fares,
Then hasten back and take the crook anon.
The goats are tame—the least of all my cares,
Save one, that tawny thief ; keep watch upon
His bearing, lest he butt thee unawares.

IX.

THE LOVE-SPELL.

Idyl iii., 28–30.

I THOUGHT upon my lady as I strode
Last night from labour, and bemoaned my lot,
Uncertain if she loves or loves me not,
Who gives no sign or token ; till the road
Bent round and took me past my Love's abode.
And then some happy chance, I know not what,
Moved me to try a spell long time forgot,
By which love's issue may be clear foreshowed.
I plucked a poppy from the wayside grass
And struck it sharply on my naked arm,
Striving to burst its inner heart. Alas !
The petals only clung in painless calm.
And then I knew how this could never be,
That my dear Love's dear heart should break for me.

X.

SIMICHIDAS.

Idyl vii., 21-26.

SIMICHIDAS, thou love-demented loon !
What haste is this, when no man's need doth call ?
Surely the gods have witched thee. 'Tis high noon.
No creature else hath any strength at all ;
The spotted lizard sleeps upon the wall ;
The skiey larks drop earthward for the boon
Of one still hour ; the ants forget to crawl.
Naught stirs except the stones beneath thy shoon.
Nay, but I know ; not love impels thee thus ;
Thy journey's end will bring a baser gain.
Some burgher's feast or vintner's overplus
Of trodden grapes—for these thy feet are fain.
Well, go thy way ; be fortunate. But us
This pleasant shade retains and shall retain.

XI.

AGEANAX.

Idyl vii., 52-62.

DEAR voyager, a lucky star be thine,
To Mytilenè sailing over sea,
Or foul or fair the constellations shine,
Or east or west the wind-blown billows flee.
May halcyon-birds that hover o'er the brine
Diffuse abroad their own tranquillity,
Till ocean stretches stilly as the wine
In this deep cup which now we drain to thee.
From lip to lip the merry circle through
We pass the tankard and repeat thy name ;
And having pledged thee once, we pledge anew,
Lest in thy friends' neglect thou suffer shame.
God-speed to ship, good health to pious crew,
Peace by the way, and port of noble fame !

XII.

COMATAS.

Idyl vii., 78-82.

IN the great cedar chest for one whole year
The pious goatherd by his lord confined,
Because he reckoned not his flock more dear
Than the dear Muse he served with loyal mind,
Was fed by ministers whom none can bind—
The blunt-faced bees that came from far and near,
Spreading the Muse's signal on the wind,
And found a crevice, and distilled the clear
Sweet juice of flowers to feed the prisoned thrall,
Till the slow months went round and he was free.
Then, tuneful herds, spare not the fold and stall
For sacrifice, nor fear your lord may see ;
The Muse can save her servants when they call—
The Muse who sped that long captivity.

XIII.

AT THE SHRINE OF PAN.

Idyl vii., 106-108.

O GOATISH god, I pray you ! Grant my prayer,
And in my view great Zeus is less divine :
Reject it,—at your peril,—if you dare !
And look no more for any gift of mine.
And who will then support this paltry shrine ?
Though you yourself subsist on frugal fare,
Others have wants, and as the wise opine,
'Tis never well to leave the cupboard bare.
Few thieves will quite good-humouredly forego
Their wonted booty from the sacred sod ;
And herb-whips sting ; I think at least you know
With what effect some boys can wield the rod.
Observe in time how thick these nettles grow,
And flee the shame that waits a pauper god.

XIV.

AT THE FARM OF PHRASIDAMUS.

Idyl vii., 133-146.

WHERE elm and poplar branch to branch have grown,
In cool deep shade the shepherds take their rest
On beds of fragrant vine-leaves newly strown,
Till the great sun declineth in the west.
From thorny thickets round, as if opprest
By secret care, the ring-dove maketh moan ;
With sudden cry from some remoter nest
The nooning owlet hunts in dreams alone ;
A merry noise the burnt cicalas make,
While honeyed horns are droning everywhere ;
The fruit-trees bend as though foredoomed to break
With burden heavier than their strength can bear,
And if the faintest zephyr seem to shake,
Drop down an apple now, and now a pear.



THE SINGING-MATCH, I.

Idyl viii.

FROM upland pastures, where the flocks are wending
 Slow-footed ways through heather-bells and fern,
 Comes down a sound with sea-born murmurs blending
 Of lips that make sweet melody in turn.

'Tis Daphnis with Menalcas sharp-contending
 For the bright flute which both are keen to earn ;
 While hard at hand a goatherd tarries, bending
 Rapt ears of judgment while the singers burn.
 Menalcas, first, hymns Love and all the blessing
 Which haps to field and fold where Love's feet stray ;
 He tells of dearth and leanness clear confessing
 What ills befall, should Love despised betray ;
 Ah, poor the man, though land and gold possessing,
 In whose demesne no Love consents to stay.

XVI.

THE SINGING-MATCH, II.

THEN Daphnis strikes the note of one that plaineth,
Whose Love is not the Love he hoped to find ;
A Love which after blandishment disdaineth
To bless the heart too readily resigned.
Slight snares indeed are they which Eros feigneth,
For well he knows that lovers' eyes are blind,
But none the captured beast more keenly paineth
Than Love's entrapment cruelly unkind.
All things have grief at times. When high winds
 shake it,
The grove is grieved with plaintive murmurings ;
So grieves the woodland bird when fowlers take it,
To feel the net encompassing its wings ;
And so the heart when peace and joy forsake it
At Love's enravishment. Thus Daphnis sings.

XVII.

THE SINGING-MATCH, III.

AND last the goatherd, like as one awoken
From sylvan slumbers on a summer day,
Whose sleep is filled with birds, and only broken
Because the thrushes all have flown away,—
Uplifts his head, and with a word soft-spoken
Declares the victor in the bloodless fray :
' Thine is the flute, O Daphnis ! Take the token,
For thou hast conquered with the crowning lay.
And, O, if thou wilt teach to carol brightly
This mouth of mine, as through the fields we go,
To thee shall fall a monster goat that nightly
Makes every milking-bowl to overflow.'
Then clapped the lad his hands, and leapt as lightly
As weaning fawns that leap around the doe.

XVIII.

MENALCAS.

Idyl viii., 63–66.

WITH limbs out-stretched along the thymy ground
The dog Lampùrus slumbers in the shade,
While tender ewes unchecked by warning sound
Go wandering idly through the sylvan glade,
In guileless ignorance all undismayed
By cruel beasts that hold the copse around
And make the herd Menalcas half-afraid—
The boyish herd who cries : ‘ O heedless hound,
Is this thy helping of my timorous youth—
To let the flock disperse the woods among,
With no preventing feet, no faithful tongue ?
The very wolves might show a deeper ruth,
And spare to raven with ensanguined tooth,
Seeing the shepherd of the sheep is young.’

XIX.

THE TOMB OF DIOCLES.

Idyl xii., 27-33.

HERE, stranger, pause, and take a moment's ease
With pleasant thinking on a good man dead.
This marble marks the tomb of Diocles ;
Say not that virtue sleeps unhallowèd !
The grateful tribes delight with arts like these
To deck the pillow of a noble head.
Nor are these all ; beneath yon arching trees
The merriest chorus of the spring is led.
For on a day from country cots around
Come troops of ruddy children fair of face,
And forming rings about this holy ground,
Contest the guerdon of a bright embrace ;
And whoso kisseth with the deftest grace
Goes homeward to his mother, happy, crowned.

xx.

H Y L A S.

Idyl xiii.

WHAT pool is this by galingale surrounded,
With parsley and tall iris overgrown ?
It is the pool whose wayward nymphs confounded
The quest of Heracles to glut their own
Desire of love. Its depths hath no man sounded
Save the young Mysian argonaut alone,
When round his drooping neck he felt, astounded,
The cruel grasp that sank him like a stone.
Through all the land the Hero wandered, crying
' Hylas ! ' and ' Hylas ! ' till the close of day,
And thrice there came a feeble voice replying
From watery caverns where the prisoner lay ;
Yet to his ear it seemed but as the sighing
Of zephyrs through the forest far away.

THE TUNNY-FISHERS.

Idyl xxi.

IN rude log-cabin by the lone sea-shore
Two aged fishers slept the sleep of toil.
Rough was their life, and scant their household store,
Scarce aught but hooks and nets and seamen's coil.
To one of these came visions of strange spoil ;
He caught a fish—such fish as none before
Caught ever, bright with sheen and glittering foil,
A golden fish ; and made high vows no more
To sail the seas, but spend the troven gold ;
Then woke and wept to starve or be forsworn.
To whom his fellow : ' Surely, being old,
Thou drivellest. Vow and vision both are born
Of air. Catch living fish or die.' And cold
Through eastern windows crept the ashy dawn.



THE YOUTH OF HERACLES.

Idyl xxiv., 101-102.

As when in flowerful gardens, lofty-girt
With thicket-hedge of ilex, oak, and vine,
Where northern breezes do no mortal hurt,
And warmer suns have constant leave to shine,
A tender sapling, be it larch or pine,
Shoots always upward with a daily spirt,
Thanks to the woven boughs that round it twine,
Thanks to the shelter of its leafy skirt :
So in a tranquil and secluded place,
Where never pierced the faintest note of harm,
The Argive hero grew and waxed apace,
Enclosed and compassed by Alcmena's arm ;
And knew not as he watched the mother's-face
The mother's-love that fenced him from alarm.

XXIII.

THE FLUTE OF DAPHNIS.

Epigram ii.

I AM the flute of Daphnis. On this wall
He nailed his tribute to the great god Pan,
What time he grew from boyhood, shapely, tall,
And felt the first deep ardours of a man.
Through adult veins more swift the song-tide ran,—
A vernal stream whose swollen torrents call
For instant ease in utterance. Then began
That course of triumph revered by all.
Him the gods loved, and more than other men
Blessed with the flower of beauty, and endowed
His soul of music with the strength of ten.
Now on a festal day I see the crowd
Look fondly at my resting-place, and when
I think whose lips have pressed me, I am proud.

XXIV.

A SACRED GROVE.

Epigram iv.

I KNOW a spot where Love delights to dream,
Because he finds his fancies happen true.
Within its fence no myrtle ever grew
That failed in wealth of flower ; no sunny beam
Has used its vantage vainly. You might deem
Yourself a happy plant and blossom too,
Or be a bird and sing as thrushes do,
So sweet in that fair place doth nature seem.
A matted vine invests the rocks above,
And tries to kiss a runlet leaping through
With endless laughter. Hither at noon comes Love,
And woos the god who is not hard to woo,
Taking his answer from the nested dove
That ever hymneth skies for ever blue.

A SYLVAN REVEL.

Epigram v.

WHAT ho ! my shepherds, sweet it were
To fill with song this leafy glade.
Bring harp and flute. The gods have made
An hour for music. Daphnis there
Shall give the note with jocund blare
From out his horn. The rest will aid
With fifes and drums, and charm the shade,
And rout the dusky wings of care.
We'll pipe to fox and wolf and bear,
We'll wake the wood with rataplan,
Fetch every beast from every lair,
Make every creature dance who can,
Set every Satyr's hoof in air,
And tickle both the feet of Pan !

XXVI.

THYRSIS.

Epigram vi.

SAD Thyrsis weeps till his blue eyes are dim,
Because the wolf has torn his pride away,—
The little kid so apt for sport and play,
Which knew his voice and loved to follow him.
Who would not weep that cruel Fate and grim
Should end her pranks on this unhappy day,
And give her tender innocence a prey
For savage jaws to harry limb from limb ?
Yet think, O shepherd, how thy tears are vain
To rouse the dead or bring the slain again ;
Beyond all hope her body lies, alack !
Devoured she is ; no bones of her remain.
The leaping hounds are on the murderer's track,
But will they, can they, bear thy darling back ?

XXVII.

CLEONICUS.

Epigram ix.

LET sailors watch the waning Pleiades,
And keep the shore. This man, made over-bold
By godless pride, and too much greed of gold,
Setting his gains before his health and ease,
Ran up his sails to catch the whistling breeze :
Whose corpse, ere now, the restless waves have rolled
From deep to deep, while all his freight, unsold,
Is tossed upon the tumult of the seas.
Such fate had one whose avaricious eyes
Lured him to peril in a mad emprise.
Yea, from the Syrian coast to Thasos bound,
He slipped his anchor with rich merchandise,
While the wet stars were slipping from the skies,
And with the drowning stars untimely drowned.

XXVIII.

THE EPITAPH OF EUSTHENES.

Epigram xi.

A BARD is buried here, not strong, but sweet ;
A Teacher too, not great, but gently wise ;
This modest stone (the burghers thought it meet)
May tell the world where so much virtue lies.
His happy skill it was in mart and street
To scan men's faces with a true surmise,
Follow the spirit to its inmost seat,
And read the soul reflected in the eyes.
No part had he in catholic renown,
Which none but god-inspired poets share ;
Not his to trail the philosophic gown,
That only savages of the School may wear ;
But his at least to fill an alien town
With friends, who make his tomb their loving care.



THE MONUMENT OF CLEITA.

Epigram xviii.

HERE Cleita sleeps. You ask her life and race ?
Read on, and learn a simple tale and true.
A nurse she was from the far land of Thrace,
Who tended little Medëus while he grew
A healthy, happy child, and did imbue
His nascent mind with godliness and grace
So fencing him from evil that he knew
No word of what is impious or base.
And when at length, her tale of years all told,
She came to lie in this reposeful spot,
Young Medëus, still a child, but sagely old,
Upreared this monument, that unforgot
The care beyond his recompense of gold
Might live a memory and perish not.

XXX.

THE GRAVE OF HIPPONAX.

Epigram xxi.

HERE lies a bard, Hippònax—honoured name !
Sweet were the songs that won him endless praise,
And yet his life was sweeter than his lays.
Traveller, a question fronts thee : Canst thou claim
Kinship with such in conduct void of blame ?
If not, forbear this precinct ; go thy ways ;
Lest some bright watcher of the tomb should raise
A jealous hand to cover thee with shame.
But if thy soul is free from shade of guilt,
Or, having sinned, hath been at length forgiven,
To thee all rights of common kin belong ;
Lay down thy weary limbs, and, if thou wilt,
Let slumber wrap them round, nor fear that Heaven
Will suffer any sprite to do thee wrong.

MISCELLANEOUS SONNETS

IN THE MEADOW.

THE Cuckoo called me, but I answered ' Nay ' ;
The Thrush said ' Come,' and I grew ill-content ;
Last spake the Blackbird ; then my heart forewent
Her studious purpose, and I broke the day.
Now in the meadow-grass, a world away
From aught of human life, that heart is blent
With leaf, stem, flower, in sweet entanglement,
Meshed by the young luxuriance of May,
The ox-eyed daisies glimpse me as I lie ;
Strange creeping things their devious steps have
 stayed,
And glut their wonderment from bloom and blade ;
While feathery balls are bending cubit-high
Between my quivering eyelids and the sky,
To mock me with a phantasy of shade.

II.

ON THE SUMMIT.

ABOVE the tarn, above the mantling wood,
My feet have gained at length the summit's pride,
Where cloud to peak, and peak to cloud, hath cried
Through countless years, ' God is, and God is good.'
O would that where I stand a thousand stood !
Such view to vision scarce pre-sanctified
Would more of God reveal than aught beside,
Yea, more than convent-cell or monkish hood.
For cloistered meditation needeth art
Beyond the narrow scope of common skill ;
But here the rudest, set the world apart,
Nearer to heaven by this fair height of hill,
Might trust the promptings of his natural heart
To worship, and consider, and be still.

III.

SOMETHING LOST.

How changed is Nature from the Time antique !
The world we see to-day is dumb and cold :
It has no word for us. Not thus of old
It won heart-worship from the enamoured Greek.
Through all fair forms he heard the Beauty speak ;
To him glad tidings of the Unknown were told
By babbling runlets, or sublimely rolled
In thunder from the cloud-enveloped peak.
He caught a message at the oak's great girth,
While prisoned Hamadryads weirdly sang :
He stood where Delphi's Voice had chasm-birth,
And o'er strange vapour watched the Sibyl hang ;
Or where, mid throbbings of the tremulous earth,
The caldrons of Dodona pulsed and rang.

IV.

S A R K.

O HAPPY Fate, which in the golden prime
Of this glad summer hast embarked my soul,
Despite her craven fears of rock and shoal,
And steered her safe to this delicious clime,
Where, careless of the World, and Life, and Time,
Beneath the sun-lit canopy of sky
She joys to watch the hours go floating by,
And find her fancies crisping into rhyme.
All day upon the cliff-top like a bird
I keep my nest, and lie in dreamful ease,
'Mid tall o'erarching grasses gently stirred
By the soft burden of the slumb'rous breeze—
The rhythmic splash of oarage faintly heard,
And long low murmur of the shoreward seas.

A PALÆSTRAL STUDY.

THE curves of beauty are not softly wrought :
 These quivering limbs by strong hid muscles held
 In attitudes of wonder, and compelled
 Through shapes more sinuous than a sculptor's
 thought,
 Tell of dull matter splendidly distraught,
 Whisper of mutinies divinely quelled,—
 Weak indolence of flesh, that long rebelled,
 The spirit's domination bravely taught.
 And all man's loveliest works are cut with pain.
 Beneath the perfect art we know the strain,
 Intense, defined, how deep soe'er it lies.
 From each high master-piece our souls refrain,
 Not tired of gazing, but with stretchèd eyes
 Made hot by radiant flames of sacrifice.

VI.

FLORA.

SOME faces scarce are born of earth, they say ;
Thine is not one of them, and yet 'tis fair ;
Showing the buds of hope in soft array,
Which presently will burst and blossom there ;
Now small as bells that Alpine meadows bear,—
Too low for any boisterous wind to sway.
Why should we think it shame for youth to wear
A beauty portioned from the natural day ?
'T is thine to teach us what dull hearts forget,
How near of kin we are to springing flowers.
The sap from Nature's stem is in us yet ;
Young life is conscious of uncanceled powers.
And happy they who, ere youth's sun has set,
Enjoy the golden unreturning hours.

VII.

VIRGIL.

NOT for the glittering splendour of thy verse,
O Seer-singer, do we count thee dear ;
Not for the prowess of the Ænean spear,
The long brave battling with the Dardan curse ;
But for thy human heart's sake we rehearse
Thy deep lines eloquent with hope and fear ;
Thou too wert human ; yea, to thee were near
The Fates that are about us and coerce.
Surely no softer subtler foot ere trod
Regions unlit save by the spirit's flame ;
And through all shadows this high faith was thine :
Powerless is death to quench the spark divine ;
Man's soul unfettered turneth whence it came ;
God its fruition, for its seed was God.

VIII.

A THOUGHT FROM PINDAR.

Nem. v.

TWIN immortalities man's art doth give
To man ; both fair ; both noble ; one supreme.
The sculptor beating out his portrait scheme
Can make the marble statue breathe and live ;
Yet with a life cold, silent, locative ;
It cannot break its stone-eternal dream,
Or step to join the busy human stream,
But dwells in some high fane a hieroglyph.
Not so the poet. Hero, if thy name
Lives in his verse, it lives indeed. For then
In every ship thou sail'st a passenger
To every town where aught of soul doth stir,
Through street and market borne, at camp and game,
And on the lips and in the hearts of men !

IX.

THE TORCH-BEARER.

IN splendour robed for some court-revelry
A monarch moves when eve is on the wane.
His faithful lieges flock their prince to see,
And strive to pierce the gathering shade—in vain.
But lo, a torch ! And now the brilliant train
Is manifest. Who may the bearer be ?
Not great himself, he maketh greatness plain.
To him this praise at least. What more to me ?
Mine is a lowly Muse. She cannot sing
A pageant or a passion ; cannot cry
With clamorous voice against an evil thing,
And break its power ; but seeks with single eye
To follow in the steps of Love her King,
And hold a light for men to see Him by.

BY A GRAVE-SIDE.

HERE once again I stand, and once again
Recall thy beauty, O belovèd face,
And, O belovèd soul, thy gentle grace,
Thy flower of courtesy that knew not stain.
Thou art not here : yet is it sweetest pain
To think of thee in this the nearest place
Of earthly places to that spirit-space,
Which no man sees at all except he feign.
Forgive me that I may not often come
To mourn thee here, who mourn where'er I go,
Toiling to swell the Age's Beauty-sum,
Till in the lapse of Time's eternal flow,
Mine arm as thine is dead, my lips are dumb,
My head beside thy head is laid a-low.



THE ART THAT ENDURES.

MARBLE of Paros, bronze that will not rust,
 Onyx or agate,—Sculptor, choose thy block
 Not clay nor wax nor perishable stock
 Of earthly stones can yield a virile bust
 Keen-edged against the centuries. Strive thou must
 In molten brass or adamantine rock
 To carve the strenuous shape which shall not mock
 Thy faith by crumbling dust upon thy dust.
 Poet, the warning comes not less to Thee !
 Match well thy metres with a strong design.
 Let noble themes find nervous utterance. Flee
 The frail conceit, the weak mellifluous line.
 High thoughts, hard forms, toil, rigour,—these be
 thine,
 And steadfast hopes of immortality.

AN APOLOGY.

I HOLD not lightly by this world of sense,
So full it is of things that make me cheer.
I deem that mortal blind of soul and dense,
To whom created joys are less than dear.
The heaven we hope for is not brought more near
By spurning drops of love that filter thence :
In Nature's prism some purple beams appear,
Of unrevealèd light the effluence.
Then count me not, O yearning hearts, to blame
Because at Beauty's call mine eyes respond,
Nor soon convict me of ignoble aim,
Who in the schools of Life am frankly fond ;
For out of earth's delightful things we frame
Our only visions of the world beyond.

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